

## Leech Lake Update, October 2013

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Greetings!

This update is part of a series of reports the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is sending to Leech Lake area resorts, businesses and others interested in DNR activities on Leech Lake. The goal of these messages is to keep you up to date with our findings and current activities on the lake. Earlier updates are available by visiting <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/areas/fisheries/walker/index.html>.

Feel free to contact our office if you have any questions or comments, would like copies of previous updates not posted on the website, or if you would like to be added to the mailing list.

### Recent Changes

- Tanner Stevens was recently hired as a Fisheries Specialist and will start December 6, 2013. Tanner received a B.S. degree from University of Nebraska, Lincoln in 2011 in Fisheries and Wildlife Management-Fisheries Management emphasis. He also received a M.S. degree from South Dakota State University in 2013 in Fisheries Management. Tanner will bring the Walker Area Fisheries office up to a full staffing level for the first time since the fall of 2010.

### 2013 survey work completed and to be completed on Leech Lake

- From May 31-June 1, the third of four programmed fry stockings was completed (7,527,478, OTC-marked). The programmed fry stocking in 2014 is 22.0 million fry.
- Double-crested cormorant management continued under the supervision of the Division of Resource Management, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. Spring cormorant counts have continued to decline with a peak spring population of 1,455. The fall population, which includes this year's production, was 1,028 or about half the target level. Due to the lower number of cormorants this past spring only 478 were removed. This dropped us below the goal of maintaining 500 nests on the lake.
- From July 15-23, twenty seine hauls were conducted at the five standard locations (Photo 1). The number of young-of-year walleye sampled per acre (18) was lower than the long-term average (61). The number of young-of-year yellow perch sampled per acre (536) was also lower than the long-term average (850). The average length of walleye was 2.7 inches, and was lower than the long-term average (3.8 inches).
- From August 13-22, twenty trawls were conducted at the three standard locations. The number of young-of-year walleye sampled per hour (346) was higher than the long-term average (145). The number of young-of-year yellow perch sampled per hour (6,049) was lower than the long-term average (9,274). The average length of walleye was 5.1 inches, and was lower than the long-term average (5.5 inches).
- From September 9-20, the annual gill netting survey was completed at 36 locations around the lake. Walleye catch rate (8.9 fish/net) exceeded the management objective (8.5 fish/net) and was the seventh consecutive year catch rates were above the long-term average (7.7 fish/net). Walleye size structure indicated good numbers of fish from the 2010, 2011, and 2012 year classes. These fish are currently between 9 and 16 inches, many of which are large enough for harvest. Additionally, 36% of walleye sampled were within the protected slot and will continue to provide anglers an opportunity to catch larger fish (Figure 1). Other game fish species targeted with test nets include yellow perch, and



northern pike. The yellow perch catch rate (fish/net) was the lowest observed over the past 31 years, was below the management objective, and decreased for the sixth consecutive year.

- From September 12-19, twelve standard night time electrofishing stations were sampled for young-of-year walleye. The number of young-of-year walleye sampled per hour (88) was slightly lower than the long-term average (98). The average length of these fish was 5.9 inches, and slightly lower than the long-term average (6.1 inches).
- Monthly zooplankton sampling at five standard locations lakewide has been completed from mid-May through mid-September, with only the mid-October sample remaining at this time. The mid-October sample will conclude all sampling on Leech Lake for the year.
- If you would like to volunteer next year to assist with any of the assessments just described, or if you have questions, comments, or requests please contact: Matt Ward ([matt.ward@state.mn.us](mailto:matt.ward@state.mn.us)) Large Lake Specialist at 218-547-1683, or Doug Schultz ([doug.w.schultz@state.mn.us](mailto:doug.w.schultz@state.mn.us)) Walker Area Fisheries Supervisor

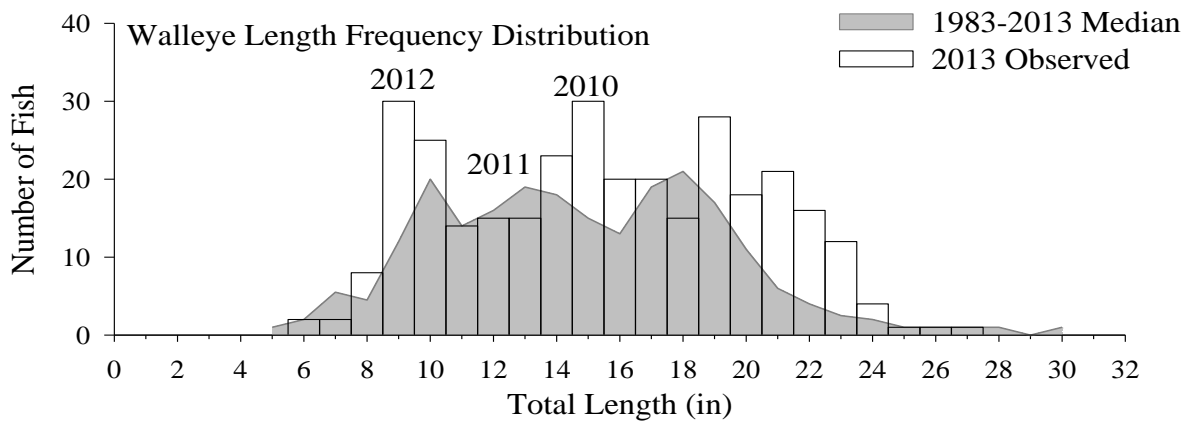


Figure 1. Length-frequency distribution of walleye sampled with experimental gillnets in Leech Lake, 2013. The 2010-12 year classes are indicated, as is the 1983-2013 median.



Photo 1. Volunteers John Eaton, Alex Eaton, and Doug Strecker assist Matt Ward with seining on July 15, 2013.